Remarks

Claims 1-9 are pending. Claims 1-8 have been amended. Support for the amendments of Claims 1 and 2 can be found in paragraph [0094] of the Applicants' Specification. Claim 9 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 11 is new. Support for Claim 11 can be found in Claims 2 and 3.

The Official Action states that the Information Disclosure Statement fails to comply with 37 C.F.R. 1.98(a)(2) because the Examiner did not receive a copy of the Korean Document No. 1996-7161 B1. A copy and a partial translation of Claim 1 of this document is submitted. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that the requirements of 37 C.F.R. 1.98(a)(2) have been satisfied.

The Official Action states that the Specification is objected to because Table 2-1, Examples 15 and 23; Table 2-2, Example 27; and Table 3, Examples 9, 10, and 11 appear to be encompassed by the claimed process, but are labeled as comparative examples.

The Applicants respectfully submit that the categorizations are correct. However, Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to further clarify the distinction between the comparative examples and the subject matter recited in the claims. Table 2-1, Examples 15 and 23; Table 2-2, Example 27; and Table 3 Examples 9, 10, and 11 are indicated as Comparative Examples because they highlight the effects of atmospheric conditions and the composition of the slab on the properties of the slab.

The Applicants invite the Examiner to consider paragraphs [0116] –[0118] of the Applicants' Specification, which describe how the atmospheric conditions must be altered when the slab contains Cr, As, Te, Sb, Sn, P, Bi, Hg, Pb, Zn, or Cd at about a mass percent of 0.0050 or more. For example, for purification annealing temperatures of 1170°C or less, the hydrogen partial pressure in the atmosphere should be adjusted to about 0.6 atm or less in a temperature range of 1050°C or more. In

contrast, for purification annealing temperatures above 1170°C, the hydrogen partial pressure in the atmosphere should be adjusted to about 0.2 atm or less in a temperature range above 1170°C.

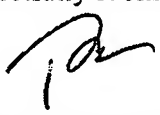
The Comparative Examples in Tables 2-1, 2-2, and 3 demonstrate that the failure to accommodate for Cr, As, Te, Sb, Sn, P, Bi, Hg, Pb, Zn, or Cd at about a mass percent of 0.0050 or more can result in a product with poor bend properties. Claims 1, and 2, however, have been amended to recite that "the steel slab contains less than 100 ppm of Al and not more than 50 ppm each of N, S, and Se and the remainder being Fe and inevitable purities."

Accordingly, the process recited in the Claims 1 and 2 excludes Cr, As, Te, Sb, Sn, P, Bi, Hg, Pb, Zn, and Cd. Therefore, the claimed process is distinct from the process that yielded the Comparative Examples because these examples did not exclude Cr, As, Te, Sb, Sn, P, Bi, Hg, Pb, Zn, and Cd and did not appropriately adjust the atmospheric conditions. Based on the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that the Specification appropriately classifies the cited Comparative Examples in Tables 2-1, 2-2, and 3 and request reconsideration and removal of the rejection.

Claim 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103 as allegedly anticipated by or obvious in view of Hayakawa. In light of the cancellation of Claim 9, the Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections are moot.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that the entire Application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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